

MINUTES ADOPTED BY CITY COUNCIL

October 3, 2005
Greenville, NC

The Greenville City Council met in a joint special meeting with the Pitt County Commissioners on the above date at 7:00 p.m. at Sheppard Memorial Library. The meeting was called to order by Mayor Parrott and Chairman Owens. The invocation was offered by Vice-Chairman Garris, and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mayor Pro-Tem Miller. The following were present.

City

Mayor Robert D. Parrott
Mayor Pro-Tem Ric Miller
Council Member Mildred A. Council
Council Member Ray Craft
Council Member Pat Dunn
Council Member Chip Little
City Manager Wayne Bowers
City Attorney Dave Holec
City Clerk Wanda Elks

Council Member Absent: Council Member Rose H. Glover

County

Chairman Mark Owens, Jr.
Vice-Chairman Jimmy Garris
Commissioner Glenn Bowen
Commissioner Tom Coulson
Commissioner David Hammond
Commissioner Eugene James
Commissioner Melvin McLawhorn
Commissioner John Minges
Commissioner Beth Ward
County Manager Scott Elliott
County Attorney Joanne Borgdorff
County Clerk Susan Banks

Chairman Owens and Mayor Parrott thanked everyone for attending the joint meeting.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion was made by Mayor Pro-Tem Miller and seconded by Council Member Craft to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Owens stated if there was no objection from the County Commissioners, the proposed agenda stood as approved. No objection was voiced.

AREAS OF MUTUAL COOPERATION

Mayor Parrott spoke about the different areas of collaboration that are currently being done.

- Property tax collection
- Occupancy tax financing of the Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Greenville Convention Center
- Motor vehicle tax collection
- Joint drug task force
- Shared homeland security grants
- Pitt/Greenville Crimestoppers
- Monthly law enforcement executive meeting with Sheriff's Office and Greenville Police Department
- Police Department use of Pitt County drug lab
- Joint gang awareness campaign
- County Sheriff's Office—Police Department mutual aid agreement
- Cooperation in recreation programs between the City Recreation and Parks Department and the County Community Schools and Recreation Program
- Fire/Rescue emergency dispatch provided by Pitt County
- Coordination between City and County Emergency Management Department during all major emergency operations
- Greenville Utilities Commission water, electric and gas service to areas outside the Greenville city limits
- Coordination of cable television franchise renewal
- Cooperation in recycling efforts
- Joint transportation planning through the Metropolitan Planning Organization
- City bus system (GREAT) contracts with Pitt Area Transit System (PATS) to provide ADA paratransit service
- City provides fixed route bus service outside city limits under contract with County
- County sharing of GIS mapping information
- Library funding

Mayor Parrott noted that there are twenty-two projects or programs that are being done jointly. Consequently, this saves money and helps both organizations' ability to move forward.

LIBRARY FUNDING

City Manager Bowers stated that the City has been the primary funding source for Sheppard Memorial Library. The County first provided funding in 1935. The current funding arrangement of the City paying 2/3 of the local general funding and the County paying 1/3 has been in place since the late 1960's. For FY 2005-2006, funding for the Library is as follows:

City of Greenville	\$914,415 (47%)
County of Pitt	\$457,207 (23%)
State of North Carolina	\$192,333 (10%)
Town of Winterville	\$107,816 (5%)
Town of Bethel	\$22,053 (1%)
Other Sources	\$274,324 (14%)
Total Funding	\$1,968,148

Of the 41,660 borrowers, 60.5% (25,222) are Greenville residents and 39.5% (16,438) are Pitt County (non-Greenville) residents. The Farmville library and other libraries in the county receive funds but not through the Sheppard Memorial Library System. There are benefits to having a countywide library system.

Mr. Willie Nelms, Sheppard Memorial Library Director, said that State funding has increased over the last few years. He said that the State Legislature increased funding.

Mayor Parrott asked if the Farmville library would benefit by being in the system, and Mr. Nelms replied that the small libraries cannot afford to pay professional librarians because they do not get enough funding from the State. There is a formula based on the economies of scale, and the Farmville Library receives \$3800 from the State. Mr. Nelms said there is a trend towards becoming a countywide library system.

Mr. Nelms said that they do access grant funds as well as federal funds. State library systems apply those funds. He spoke of the opening of the Bethel and Winterville libraries. The Department of Cultural Resources says they had to be part of the system to receive additional funds. Mr. Nelms said the benefit of being one system is to have shared resources and access to the book collection and the State-developed system.

Mayor Parrott asked if there would be more funding for the Sheppard Memorial Library if the Farmville library was part of the County system, and Mr. Nelms replied that they receive a \$35,000 block grant and this would not change Sheppard Library's total funding.

Mr. Elliott stated that this had been looked into and there would be no additional funding if Farmville came under Sheppard Library.

Commissioner Bowen asked where the County and City can both save money. He would be in favor of that.

Mayor Parrott said they need to consider changing the funding formula.

Mr. Nelms said they are making advances and there is a major need to look into the future and do planning for the libraries. They really need to consider where the population growth is within the county.

Commissioner James said they need to encourage students to use libraries in the summer.

Mayor Parrott informed the group that the City paid for the additions to Carver Library.

Commissioner Bowen asked about the bookmobile, and Mr. Nelms replied that the bookmobile was bought for \$80,000 and they had a \$50,000 grant.

Mayor Parrott suggested that staff could get together and evaluate this situation.

PITT COUNTY EMS SERVICE UPDATE

County Manager Elliott reported on changes made over the last five to ten years in the County's EMS system. The County now has ten squads outside of the City that are all funded through the EMS tax. The EMS Study Committee has been charged with looking at funding alternatives, considering such possibilities as the County takeover, hospital takeover and different combinations of options. They have surveyed all county EMS squads. This will be presented to the Committee at a future meeting. They will consider options such as privatizing or consolidating squads. He asked if the City would be interested in providing the services if the County decides to privatize the service.

Council Member Dunn said that would be more complicated because they would have to consider fire service also.

CITY OF GREENVILLE'S FEDERAL LOBBYING PROGRAM

City Manager Bowers reported that the first agreement with The Ferguson Group in Washington D.C. was in November 2003 and was for one year. He said they have continued contracting with the Ferguson Group because they are doing different projects. The Ferguson Group has improved their communications with federal legislators and has more than paid for itself. The agreement provisions include the City having a Washington Representative. They review and help provide the city with information on the following:

- Annual Federal Agenda
- eCivis – grant locators service and helps monitor the process
- Monitor federal funding opportunities
- Assists with grant approval
- Provides a resource on federal issues
- Arranges meetings with federal officials
- Submits periodic reports on federal legislation
- Provides monthly reports on federal agenda

The Ferguson Group is paid \$7,000 per month plus up to \$6000 per year for expenses. The City has received \$13,770,704 in earmarks in the past three years as follows:

Police wireless technology grant	\$200,000
Green Mill Run stream restoration study	\$200,000
West Greenville revitalization project	\$100,000
Tar River Greenway	\$1,500,000

Completion of the Green Mill Run stream restoration study	\$60,000
Tenth Street Connector	\$7,131,200
Greenways expansion project	\$1,600,000
Expansion buses and intermodal center	\$2,979,504

Counties the Ferguson Group assists in North Carolina include Forsyth, Wake, Alleghany, Cumberland, Washington, and Caldwell. It was suggested that the County and City could share the cost. The annual cost will be more than \$90,000 for the two entities together.

School Board Chairman Michael Dixon arrived and asked to be allowed to interrupt the meeting and introduce the new Superintendent of Pitt County Schools, Dr. Beverly Reep. Ms. Reep expressed how excited she is about the opportunity of coming to Greenville and Pitt County.

Commissioner Minges asked about the contract set pricing for The Ferguson Group.

City Manager Bowers said the price has been the same each year.

Commissioner Minges encouraged moving forward on the joint effort for the lobbyist.

Council Member Ray Craft informed the group that a lot of calls have been made and time spent in order to obtain the earmarks that have been received.

Commissioner Minges asked if Al Delia with East Carolina University is still working as a lobbyist in Washington, DC, and City Manager Bowers replied that he is. The Ferguson Group helped the City receive earmarked funds. Council Member Mildred Council learned about the Ferguson group at a League of Municipalities meeting.

Council Member Council said the City believes in it and hopes the County will join with the City in utilizing the Ferguson Group.

Commissioner Bowen said he had heard of the Ferguson Group at the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners State Conference. There was discussion about other companies that perform the same services.

City Manager Bowers stated that he discussed the Ferguson Group because that was the company that the City uses for this service.

Commissioner James said the City and County need to work together on sewer infrastructure. There is \$20 million available from grants or other funds, and the community needs to get those funds for use on sewer for school facilities. The County tried to take over the water system some 20 years ago.

There was discussion about earmarks versus grants.

Commissioner Hammond asked about airport funding and how funding is always available for airports. He suggested these funds may also be utilized for other projects.

Commissioner Bowen suggested the Board should invite the Ferguson Group to meet with the Board of County Commissioners.

City Manager Bowers said they are coming down and could do a presentation for the County Commissioners.

PITT COUNTY "LOCAL OPTION SALES TAX" STATUS REPORT

County Manager Elliott reported on the sales tax legislation initiative for school construction. He reported that the Board of County Commissioners pursued a one percent sales tax for the authority to go from seven to eight cents sales tax locally. The legislation is House Bill 1050 and was passed by the study committee and the House of Representatives. The County has been promised that this Bill will be taken up in May 2006 by the Senate. County Manager Elliott reported that when the County submitted this legislation and it was approved by the Committee, about 60 counties asked to be added to the local bill. The Bill does require a referendum be held in the County to determine community support prior to the sales tax being increased. County Manager Elliott reported that before the Bill got passed in the House, it was changed by reducing the sales tax from one percent to one half percent. This Bill also states that these funds are solely dedicated for brick and mortar for schools. There is a need of over \$300 million and the County has provided \$60 million out of the \$300 million needed.

Chairman Owens thanked the Mayor and Council for their cooperation on the sales tax issue.

County Manager Elliott said there is a primary in May and a special election can be held in the summer or next November.

Commissioner Ward said the Board had to agree to add the referendum to the legislation in order to get it passed.

Mr. Elliott thanked everyone for their support and encouraged everyone to talk to the House and Senate Members.

PUBLIC TRANSIT SERVICES COOPERATION

Mr. Tom Tysinger, City of Greenville Director of Public Works, reported on the 2003 Study Report on Regionalization of Transportation Service. The study included funds from the City, County, East Carolina University, NC Department of Transportation and available grants. This study suggested an open transit system with Pitt Area Transit. They looked at a Rural Transit Program (RTP). The GREAT Bus System and PATS work together to provide transit service. He stated they could be doing better and need to take advantage of Federal funds. Mr. Tysinger stated that the City, County, and other agencies need to continue communications on transportation. They discussed a merger with PATS but local funds must be committed to operate this system. Staff has considered information on other transit systems, state funding, and expanding the public transportation to surrounding counties. Staff needs to look at specifics of a possible merger on transportation.

POTENTIAL COOPERATION ON JOINT EMPLOYEE BENEFIT PROGRAMS

Ms. Gerry Case, City of Greenville Human Resources Director, gave an overview of the City's health insurance program. She said that they have a fully-funded program and pay a portion of the premiums for all employees. Since 1997, the City has covered all employees from the City, Airport, Convention and Visitors Authority, Greenville Utilities and the Library. This covers about 1200 to 1300 employees with 2800 members with families included. The newly signed agreement will have a five percent rate increase on January 1. There was some interest in seeing if it could be beneficial for the City and County to consider combining programs for reduced costs. Ms. Case spoke of the funding of the program.

County Manager Elliott said the County has a self-insured program that is administered by Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS). The County is part of an insurance pool with the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners (NCACC), which has 100 counties in the plan. Pitt County just received an award of \$10,000 for holding down its costs for the last three years. The County is very satisfied with its current plan and, to change it, the County would have to come out of the Association's pool because the City could not join the County's plan. This would not be a savings for the County.

Mr. John Bulow said the County has been part of a self-funded program for 22 years with the NCACC and with BCBS. BCBS will not be a carrier of this program if the City is added to the County's policy.

The City and County Managers were asked to review costs and report back to the boards.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Wanda T. Elks, MMC
City Clerk